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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAR ES SALAAM 000489

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [TZ](#)  
SUBJECT: EXTRAORDINARY SADC HEADS OF STATE SUMMIT:  
TANZANIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS' BRIEFING ON MARCH  
28-29 MEETINGS

REF: A. HARARE 00274  
[1](#)B. STATE 038986

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission D. Purnell Delly for  
reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Tanzanian Foreign Minister Bernard Membe briefed U.S., Canada and EU chiefs of mission March 30 to "fill in the gaps" on the outcome of the SADC Summit held March 28-29 in Dar es Salaam. Membe said SADC leaders told Mugabe that violence perpetrated against the opposition was not acceptable and that "President Mugabe understood." He also said SADC leaders opposed all talk of "regime change" except for change stemming from the democratic process. South Africa's President Mbeki and his emissaries would talk to all sides in Zimbabwe and attempt to set the conditions for free and fair elections in 2008. Mbeki will report progress or lack thereof to President Kikwete on a regular basis. Only after internal political dialogue starts and progress is made would SADC consider calling on Western nations to ease sanctions.

[1](#)2. (C) Membe requested that the United States, United Kingdom and other Western nations tone down their "war of words" with Mugabe to give SADC's initiative a few months to make headway. He said progress would be measured not only by internal dialogue, exercise of free speech, and the setting aside of violence, but Mugabe's adherence to a clear timeline for 2008 elections. Should Mbeki report back that no progress is being made, President Kikwete would consider calling another Summit. "We will know if SADC's initiative is succeeding because the outcome of the political dialogue will be clear to all." Membe gave a short readout on the Summit's deliberations on Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of Congo situations (paras 11-13). Finally, he assured the assembled chiefs of mission that as Chair of SADC's Politics, Defense, and Security Organ, Tanzania would keep the international community apprised of progress through regular briefings. END SUMMARY.

SADC Supports Zimbabwe Elections in 2008

[1](#)3. (C) Membe told the U.S. Canadian and EU heads of mission March 30 that the SADC leaders considered the March 28 to 29 Summit a "breakthrough" because it was the first time that the political and economic woes of Zimbabwe were openly discussed in both the Troika meeting March 28 and in the full Summit on March 29. In the March 28 four-hour closed door meeting, the seven heads of state from the "double troika" met to discuss the roadmap for the next day's summit. The discussion was broken into three tracks: the political situation, Zimbabwe's relations with Western nations, and the economic situation.

[Note: The "double troika" consisted of SADC's Politics, Defense, and Security Organ (Tanzania, Angola, Namibia and South Africa as invited guest); and the SADC Troika (Lesotho, Zambia and Botswana).]

#### SADC Troika Demanded Mugabe's Full Cooperation in Summit Meeting

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14. (C) The double troika set the ground rules that President Mugabe would have to agree to discuss all issues openly in the full Summit meeting the following day. They outlined the problems beginning with the a complete collapse of political security in Zimbabwe and reviewed all incidents both prior to and after March 11. The troika members denounced the excessive force that was used and the intolerance of the GOZ to the opposition. The members also expressed their deep concern over the lack of clarity in the timeline for presidential elections in Zimbabwe. They noted that the ruling ZANU-PF is divided into three groups: supporters of Mugabe, supporters of the Vice President and supporters of the Minister of Local Administration. Troika members were concerned that President Mugabe has never been willing to face the truth or discuss Zimbabwe's situation in SADC meetings. "The troika leaders were adamant that Mugabe had to realize and admit to the seriousness of the problems in Zimbabwe. If he did not cooperate, SADC would not lend him any support." President Kikwete, as chair, was charged with explaining to Mugabe what would be on the table the next day and to get him to agree to fully participate. According to Membe, Kikwete met with Mugabe until 1 a.m. and got his buy-in.

15. (C) Minister Membe said that Mugabe kept his word and fully participated in the March 29 Summit meeting, a marathon from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with no lunch break. "His cooperation was superb," Membe reported. "I think he absorbed some of the ideas the Summit leaders laid out; he also outlined to the leaders his view of the situation, which many heads of state had never heard before."

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#### Conditions for a Political Dialogue

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16. (C) Mugabe admitted there are serious problems and a deep political crisis in Zimbabwe. He resented that the MDC leader Tsvangirai had never recognized him as president, refuses to speak with or even greet him, and never attends any official events where Mugabe is presiding. "How can there be any dialogue if he refuses to discuss?" he complained. President Mbeki reported to the Summit that his emissaries had already met with the MDC opposition leaders the previous week. The opposition was ready to meet with Mugabe if the timetable is confirmed and adhered to for the presidential elections in Zimbabwe. They reminded Mugabe that the constitution mandated that the elections be held in March 2008. If Mugabe announced 2008 is the election date, then "he could expect the maximum support from SADC," said Membe.

#### SADC Supports 2008 Democratic Elections in Zimbabwe

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17. (C) Minister Membe outlined what SADC's support would be should Mugabe agree to 2008 elections and preparations begin and make progress. In that case, SADC member states would support the process and: 1) request that the EU lift targeted sanctions; 2) ask Western countries to end the isolation of Zimbabwe; 3) request that the investigation into human rights violations be suspended; and 4) ask the United States, Canada and the EU to give SADC's initiative some "breathing room" for a few months to let the internal dialogue move forward. Membe added: "Due to the tone and resolve of the heads of state in the Summit meeting in outlining theses conditions to Mugabe, I have no doubt that the SADC plan will move forward."

#### International Situation: Request to Tone Down "War of Words"

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18. (C) Membe asked the United States, UK, and other Western countries to tone down the "war of words" with Mugabe. He admitted that Mugabe has a temper "when provoked" so asked that the rift between the Western nations and Mugabe not be further widened through heated rhetoric. He noted that the land issue is a part of the divide, especially with the UK, and said that in the SADC leaders' view, while not linked directly to the internal dialogue SADC has asked Mugabe to accept, the land dispute cannot be completely ignored or "sidelined." Membe noted that Prime Minister Blair had told President Kikwete during his UK trip that the remaining funds from the land compensation money agreed to in 1981

were available and would be disbursed through UNDP oversight.

#### No Shortcut: New Leader in Zimbabwe Must be Chosen Democratically

¶9. (C) Membe spoke emphatically that the only change of leadership in Zimbabwe the SADC heads of state would support is through the democratic process. "There is no shortcut," he reiterated. "No one can be installed to replace a dictator. The Zimbabwe people have the right to a fully democratic election to choose their leader." He noted that President Mbeki was charged to assure that all necessary steps are taken over the next 12 months to create a "conducive climate" for a fair democratic process to be put into motion.

#### Economic Objectives

¶10. (C) The SADC Summit leaders listened to Mugabe's version of how Zimbabwe ended up in its current economic crisis with spiraling inflation, out of control exchange rate, and the obvious suffering of Zimbabwe's citizens. The Summit heads offered to send a team headed up by the Executive Secretary of SADC to Zimbabwe to assess the underlying causes of the economic woes. The team would then offer suggestions that both SADC, Western nations and the IFIs might be willing to support. However, progress on the economic track, particularly in approaching the international community to consider easing sanctions, would be linked to making headway in the political dialogue. SADC would expect measurable efforts by Mugabe and his government to dialogue with the opposition, to adhere to the 2008 election timetable, and to create a climate conducive to fair elections, including freedom of expression. Violent responses to the opposition and any torture or mistreatment of opposition leaders would not be tolerated. Membe confirmed that Mugabe had understood these conditions. He noted that President Mbeki will report regularly to President Kikwete; if the dialogue is moving forward, it will continue. However, should it stall, Kikwete will call another full Summit which Mugabe would be asked to attend.

#### Democratic Republic of Congo

¶11. (C) The SADC Summit discussed the DRC security situation and

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reaffirmed that all private armies must be integrated into the national army or be disbanded. In response to a question, Minister Membe noted that oversight of this process by SADC would be assumed by the Secretary General (SG) of SADC who will visit the DRC in the near

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future. The SG would report back to President Kikwete, chair of the Organ of Politics, Defense and Security, on whether progress was being made.

¶12. (C) Minister Membe assured the chiefs of mission that Jean-Pierre Bemba's private army has been virtually disbanded with its 700 plus members either apprehended, killed or hiding in the bush, so he no longer has a base. Membe noted that Bemba is in the South African Embassy in poor health with a broken leg. President Kabila was prepared to put out a criminal warrant for his arrest, and South Africa was not going to object. However, Kabila has instead decided to allow Bemba to go to Portugal for medical treatment, if he would agree to go into exile with his family. Membe believed Bemba's options are limited: he would not be able to stay in the South African Embassy as a fugitive; in his current state of health, living outside of Kinshasa would not be viable. Thus, he may well accept to leaving the country with his family.

#### Lesotho

¶13. (C) Membe explained in detail the events leading up to the impasse between the opposition and ruling party that had brought Maseru to a virtual standstill for the same two days (March 22 and 23) that the SADC committee meeting of the Organ of Politics, Defense and Security was underway. Based on the report from the Prime Minister of Lesotho during the March 29 Summit meeting, the SADC heads of state decided to send a delegation of seven senior SADC officials to Maseru. The team's objective would be to work toward setting up a dialogue between the opposition parties, the ruling party and the government, leading to reconciliation and, if possible, to settling these issues outside of the courts.

Comment

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¶14. (C) At times Minister Membe struck us as overly sanguine. He suggested that the very fact that Mugabe would agree to discuss internal Zimbabwean politics was a signal event. He also stressed, more accurately we think, that what went on beneath the surface -- that is, what he assured us was frank and candid exchanges between Summit heads and Mugabe far from the microphones -- was more important than the official communiqué itself. At the end of the day, however, he was on target with his summary comment on the Summit: "There is nothing to hide here; we will all know if progress on the political front is being made in Zimbabwe over the next few months or not." END COMMENT.

RETZER